



GCE

English Language

Advanced GCE **H470**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2017 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful
- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection
- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes:

- An invitation to get involved in Cambridge Assessment's research into **how current reforms are affecting schools and colleges**
- Links to important documents such as **grade boundaries**
- A reminder of our **post-results services** including Enquiries About Results
- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme
- A link to our handy Teacher Guide on **Supporting the move to linear assessment** to support you with the ongoing transition

Understanding how current reforms are affecting schools and colleges

Researchers at Cambridge Assessment¹ are undertaking a research study to better understand how the current reforms to AS and A levels are affecting schools and colleges.

If you are a Head of Department (including deputy and acting Heads), then we would be very grateful if you would take part in this research by completing their survey. If you have already completed the survey this spring/summer then you do not need to complete it again.

The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes and all responses will be anonymous.

To take part, please click on this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KP96LWB>

Enquiry About Results

If any of your students' results are not as expected and University places are reliant on them, you may wish to consider one of our Enquiry About Results services. For full information about the options available visit: <http://ocr.org.uk/administration/stage-5-post-results-services/enquiries-about-results/>

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other assessments, can be found on [Interchange](#).

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¹ Cambridge Assessment is a not-for-profit non-teaching department of the University of Cambridge, and is the parent organisation of OCR, Cambridge International Examinations and Cambridge English Language Assessment

Supporting the move to linear assessment

This was the first year that students were assessed in a linear structure. To help you navigate the changes and to support you with areas of difficulty, download our helpful Teacher guide: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/341817-moving-from-modular-to-linear-qualifications-teachers-guide.pdf>

Further support from OCR

activeresults

Active Results offers a unique perspective on results data and greater opportunities to understand students' performance.

It allows you to:

- Review reports on the **performance of individual candidates**, cohorts of students and whole centres
- **Analyse results** at question and/or topic level
- **Compare your centre** with OCR national averages or similar OCR centres.
- Identify areas of the curriculum where students excel or struggle and help **pinpoint strengths and weaknesses** of students and teaching departments.

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H470/01 Exploring language

General Comments:

This is the first year for this qualification and the range of marks awarded went from the bottom of Level 2 up to the top of Level 6. The three sections in this paper seemed well-suited to the ability range of the candidates, allowing for clear differentiation in terms of levels of the performance. All candidates were able to complete the three sections in the time allowed.

Some candidates struggled with clear written expression, resulting in lower marks across the paper, but especially in Section C where clarity of argument/ comparison is required. Some candidates did not seem to have learnt much material for the paper, even at the middle of the mark range. However, examiners also saw many scripts that carefully considered linguistic implications and contextual factors across the paper, combined with fluent and mature writing, which could access the higher marks.

At the very bottom of the range, candidates had a serious lack of understanding for even basic concepts across the paper, whether linguistic methods or contextual implications – although overall the latter was dealt with more competently at this level. There were a number of scripts clumped around the high 40s/80 which just couldn't seem to demonstrate enough knowledge and engagement with the tasks across all questions. Q3 tended to attract higher marks for weaker candidates, where the base of a comparison proved helpful.

For Questions 1 and 3, it must be stated that these are data driven tasks, and, to quote from the report for the AS Level examination in the same series, “the best responses always seek to work outwards from the set extracts rather than fit these extracts to pre-learnt frameworks and concepts.”

Finally, Question 2 was noticeable in that a significant number of candidates did much better on this task than elsewhere on the paper; however, there was also another quite significant group who, having done well on Questions 1 and 3, underperformed on this question, often (but not always) as a result of failing to engage with the specified issue in sufficient critical detail.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Questions 1a and 1b

There were many candidates who performed inconsistently across the two parts of the question, with a full level of difference between their two answers, and this could well be an issue of timing. It was also noted by examiners that the response to AO3 was stronger overall than that to AO1 in both parts of the question. There are still a number of candidates who refer almost exclusively to words and sentences in very general terms, often with little or no textual evidence in support.

Some candidates combined 1a and 1b in one answer. Comparatively, the responses of these candidates were not as good as they tended to mix all the components (lexis, semantics and sentences) together in a single answer without clear separation, which led to a loss of focus and a lack of detailed development. Candidates should be reminded to separate their responses into two clear parts. A few chose to ignore the focus of the question completely and wrote often very general responses to the text as a whole.

Regarding 1a, candidates often struggled to see the patterns that occurred in the text- or having identified a pattern, to offer any detailed discussion of its significance. Deontic and epistemic

modality were sometimes confused, with many candidates seizing on the word ‘must’ to indicate the deontic domain, whereas in the context – ‘it must be’ – it was epistemic. The number of candidates who regarded ‘your’ as a possessive pronoun was also noticeable; only the best candidates correctly identified it as a determiner. Overall, however, lexis was tackled well by most, with semantic and lexical fields correctly distinguished. The majority of the candidates were able to identify the lexis from the field of computer and technology and some the lexis from a domestic family field. The conversational tone and friendly tenor of the text were also correctly identified by most.

For 1b, the question proved to be more accessible to candidates, many of whom commented upon the range of sentence constructions evident in the text. They sometimes identified patterns between the use of, for example, rhetorical questions and exclamative sentences, or interrogatives and imperatives. The numbers managing to offer the developed, close analysis and discussion of patterns necessary for the top Level were, however, still relatively few. At the lower end of achievement, confusion is still fairly widespread about the difference between compound and complex sentence structures and, less often but still quite frequently, between imperative and declarative constructions.

Question 2

As mentioned in the first part of this report, performance in Question 2 was the most varied, both by individual candidate and across the cohort as a whole. A number chose to write about Standard English rather than a standard form of spoken English, which led to largely irrelevant discussions of email, texting and written grammar. Many candidates who did accurately identify the issue could not achieve anything higher than a low level 4 because although their knowledge was often correct there was a lack of engagement with linguistics and different theories, meaning the depth of detail was rather superficial.

It was also noticeable that many candidates had misunderstood Jean Aitchison’s ideas, presenting her ‘crumbing castle’ or ‘damp spoon’ metaphors as her own views, instead of a critique of prescriptivist myths about language change. Grice’s Maxims also found their way into some answers and were offered as evidence of an already existing standard in spoken language, an error usually compounded by a misunderstanding of the maxim of quality. Some candidates thought that a humorous rant about Brexit and/or Donald Trump would somehow improve and develop their response to the question—it invariably did not.

Nonetheless, there were some impressive answers that showed mature and sensitive consideration of the issue, combined with rhetorical flair and panache. AO5 was generally better than AO2 on this question, though some candidates wrote in rather inappropriate forms for the question, including the inevitable use of taboo language which simply didn’t match the register or the audience for the task. Candidates should remember that there is equal focus on AO2 and AO5 for this question so, whilst good writing with flair will achieve high marks, lack of intellectual engagement will limit AO2 and bring down the overall mark for the question.

Question 3:

As with the AS examination, this question often scored the most highly of all the set questions, possibly because candidates have a comparative base from which to start, so identifying links between the texts is easier for them. However, some candidates waste time and write irrelevant and lengthy introductions and conclusions (presumably so they can more easily get into the answer); they should be reminded that this approach does not often gain marks, and instead limits the time available for close comparative analysis.

Quite a few responses were unbalanced by too much focus on the historical context of the information within the two texts and discussed this at length, instead of addressing the language choices made by the text producers and their effects upon receivers. A number of candidates

also tried to apply theory/concepts to the texts, but these were often unsuccessful as they were not linked into the data in the texts and lacked an exploration of the data in terms of the context – some of the more frequent examples included 'Politeness theory' and Lakoff's gender theory. Furthermore, it is noticeable that some candidates who had written quite precisely and analytically about lexis and sentence construction in Question 1 seemed unable to apply the same knowledge and understanding of the language levels to the texts in Question 3, which impacted upon their achievement for both AO1 and AO4.

Nonetheless, knowledge of methods for AO1 was generally sound, though again only the best candidates accessed Level 5 and above, whereas AO3 was more often placed in higher bands on this question. Many candidates could suggest at least some contextual considerations, drawing links between the two texts in this respect. AO4 was also generally sound, although at the bottom end quite a few candidates did not get beyond very general comments about the differences between spoken and written texts, which limited their achievement to the bottom of Band 3 at most, and sometimes below this.

H470/02 Dimensions of linguistic variation

General Comments:

The paper was approached in a productive manner by many candidates across the ability range. Across the three questions, candidates were able to show a broad range of conceptual knowledge which was relevant and used, on the whole, to engage with the language features of the three differing texts. This paper features no optional questions and there were no examples of candidates misunderstanding the paper structure or questions.

Candidates responded well to all three questions on the paper with the most successful candidates building three analytical essays which were heavily focused on exploring the language use and patterns of language use within all three texts. Centres would be well advised to pay careful attention to the bullet points within each level descriptor to ensure the candidates fully understand the need for data-led, linguistically analytical responses to all of the questions on this paper. The aim of each question is to allow candidates from across the ability range to explore and analyse language use in a range of differing contexts and from differing conceptual standpoints. There was clear evidence of some candidates favouring certain conceptual models or theorists and reusing them across more than one question. This was most often successful when power concepts and representations were applied to both Q2 and Q3 but attempting to apply these same concepts to Q1 sometimes caused candidates to become confused about the nature of a transcript. Similarly, in rare instances, candidates sought to apply change theories to the Q1 and Q2 data with variable success. Whilst this is a synoptic unit and, thus, allows for the use of all areas of study undertaken during the two years, candidates would do well to remember that careful and discerning use of theories which are relevant to the texts in each question is important.

In approaching all three questions, the most successful candidates were those who followed a systematic approach to exploring the data. No one approach is favoured by the Examiner and it was equally possible to build a successful response that began with patterns of language use or with theories or even with contexts; however, regardless of the starting point, the main focus must always return to specific analysis of the data provided. Less successful responses to all three questions were heavily focused on presenting theories without connecting them to the language of the text. These largely assertive responses struggled to prove the analytical skill or conceptual understanding (as opposed to simply knowledge) which is required of the upper half of all mark schemes.

This is a lengthy and demanding paper and a number of candidates chose to answer the paper in reverse order to allow for the highest mark questions to be completed first. As with the approach to analysis referenced above, the Examiner favours no particular order and candidates who followed this structure often produced good responses. There were some instances of inconsistency seen across the paper where candidates were able to produce one or two strong responses followed by one that was considerably weaker. This did not seem to be linked to question order or timing. In some instances, candidates appeared to run out of time but this was relatively rare. Some candidates wrote at great length, needing two or three additional answer booklets, and whilst many of these responses were successful, there were some instances of lengthy responses becoming self-penalising by virtue of a lack of structure, control and/or accuracy across the response as a whole.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

This question featured a transcript of Emma, aged four years and ten months, and her mother. Candidates from across the ability range were able to engage with the language use in the text and showed a range of conceptual understanding. The most successful approaches were systematic in considering different aspects of language use and drawing explicit links from precisely analysed language features to concepts.

The question instructs candidates to examine the language development stage of the child and this section of the question is designed to ensure a clear focus on the child rather than any adult interlocutors present. The language of, in this case, the mother remains relevant to the response as discussion of the mother's attempts to elicit responses from Emma are relevant to Emma's language production in the transcript. Many candidates sought to link Emma's language production to stages of grammatical development with the vast majority of candidates suggesting that Emma was in either the telegraphic or post-telegraphic stage. The strongest responses weighed up evidence for Emma being either on the cusp of the post-telegraphic stage or being in that stage but not entirely securely. When this was successful, responses focused on a range of grammatical features including the omission of the auxiliary verb in Emma's first utterance or the use of present tense verbs when discussing events in the past tense. Less successful attempts focused on using phonology as means of 'proving' which grammatical stage Emma was in. This was not suggestive of a clear understanding of the concept. Candidates would be well advised to always remain tentative in applying conceptual models to real data and should also aim for a clear understanding of which language levels are appropriate in exploring which theories.

The question also instructs candidates to explore phonology, grammar and meaning; however, the Examiner does not expect an even focus on these three areas as the data will often lead responses towards certain salient features of language use; however, candidates should aim to make comment on these three areas. The final area, meaning, encompasses multiple language levels and allows candidates an open opportunity to consider lexis, semantics, pragmatics and even discourse. It was also felt that discussion of both grammar and phonology could be clearly linked to meaning and this was seen in some successful responses.

Of the three areas named, grammar was the area most consistently focused on and it was felt that this fairly reflected the language use in the data. In many cases, candidates were able to engage with pronoun use and negation as a means of linking the data to Bellugi and McNeil's theories on the acquisition of these features. Less successful responses described theories at the expense of analysing language features and these responses struggled to show the analytical skill required by AO1 or the understanding (rather than knowledge) of theories required by AO2.

Phonology was considered by almost all candidates with varying degrees of success. In some rare cases, candidates engaged with phonology in considerable depth exploring a range of features including allomorphs and manner and place of articulation. There were frequent attempts by candidates across the ability range to engage with place and manner of articulation and, when done well, this was pleasing to see; however, this was frequently the area of the response which suggested a lack of understanding. A number of candidates incorrectly labelled /g/ or /d/ (as seen in Emma's assimilation in "dɑ:den") as fricatives. This led to some insecure analysis of reasons for the error. Candidates do not need an in depth knowledge of phonetics and phonology to successfully access this question but a secure understanding of the basic manners of articulation would be beneficial. Similarly, place of articulation caused a number of candidates to mis-label features.

In some cases, candidates discussed contextual factors, such as the presumption that the interlocutors were at home, and whilst context may form part of the analysis of language use, it is not assessed on this question. Candidates would also be well advised to avoid ‘inventing’ or guessing contextual factors which they think might be relevant.

Question 2

This question presented a text from The Independent newspaper featuring the introduction and highest entry from a list of “The 50 most influential people in the world”. Candidates from across the ability range engaged with this text in a productive manner with a high number of candidates able to explore patterns of language use in relation to concepts and contexts. Centres and candidates are advised to pay careful attention to the bullet points within each AO for this question. Whilst AO1 is not explicitly assessed on this question, the main focus of analysis remains the language use of the text. The exploration of language features and, for top band responses, patterns of language use is explicitly stated in the second bullet point under AO2. Similarly, language is also referred to consistently in AO3 bullet point 1. Successful approaches to this question centre around patterns of language use and how they are relevant to concepts and the construction of meaning.

More successful responses were able to integrate analysis of key language patterns with a wide range of concepts including representations of the producer (both the publication and the multiple producers listed) power and technology concepts. Fairclough was a regular feature of responses across the ability range and the most successful responses were able to go beyond simply linking the data to synthetic personalisation and discuss the ways in which the text builds on members’ resources and shared cultural knowledge. Another conceptual area which featured often was gender. Whilst there is, arguably, an approach to take from a gender perspective most candidates seemed to simply repeat learned knowledge about androcentric language with limited reference to the data itself. As ever, candidates are advised to allow the data to lead their analysis rather than attempting to make the data fit to the theories they wish to apply. With this particular text, the representations of the producers in the introductory section and the subsequent representation of Obama were considered more pertinent than the discussion of gender. One pattern in less successful responses was to focus solely on Obama and the ways in which he has power. These responses lost sight of the context and the data and struggled to engage with the language features of the text.

Whilst the Examiner is open to the use of a broad range of theories, less successful approaches were seen where candidates attempted to apply conversational theories to the data. Whilst features of spoken language could be argued, with some success, to contribute to the overall tenor of the data, concepts such as Grice’s co-operative principle or overt and covert prestige were not appropriate to this text.

In terms of AO3, contextual factors were considered with varying success. The most successful responses engaged with the political ideology of the producer and how that may influence the representation of Obama in the first entry. Specifically, candidates achieving near the top of the mark scheme were able to consider how the entry on Obama uses both structure and tone to foreground the positive aspects of Obama’s presidency whilst distancing themselves from the presentation of the negative aspects through the structural and grammatical features such as the euphemistic use of metaphor in the second paragraph. These responses were also able to explore the ways in which the text’s online publication would have influenced the audience response to the text and the nature of their interaction with it. Multi-modality was consistently considered and some excellent interpretation of the use of the images to anchor different sections of the text was seen in stronger responses.

Question 3

This question featured two texts which were linked by theme: Both texts focused on beggars. The most successful responses were able to engage with the ways in which patterns of language use demonstrated how attitudes towards beggars had or had not altered in the time between each text's production. Similarly successful responses focused on analysing language use in terms of the individual contexts of each text. Clear links were often made to concepts of change including prescriptivism and standardisation; however, some responses also sought to apply concepts to the data inappropriately by, for example, applying informalisation to the texts which was suggestive of a lack of understanding of the data. Some of the most successful responses were able to engage with how language use represented beggars and, perhaps more perceptively, the producers of the two texts and this was often linked to societal change in a detailed but tentative manner. Less successful approaches used the texts as a spring board for a lengthy social essay on the treatment of homeless people generally. Candidates would be well advised, as with all other sections of this paper, that the question requires focused and developed analysis of language features (AO1) which are synthesised across the two texts (AO4) as means of exploring language variation and reasons for that variation in relation to the specific context (AO3).

This is the most challenging question on the paper and that fact has been reflected in the responses seen. One consistent area that candidates neglected in even some of the most successful responses was the exploration of reasons for changes between the two texts. In general, comparison was done well but candidates must remember that the driving factor behind the comparison must remain an exploration of language variation.

Features of less successful responses included: being overly definitive about the reasons (either contextual or conceptual) for a particular feature in a text or a particular variation across the texts; offering 'translations' of the older text into so-called modern day English; and an imbalanced focus on the requirements of the question. Candidates would also be well advised to avoid over-stating the importance of Johnson's dictionary in standardising language, not least when applied to grammatical change. Similarly, the relevance of Caxton's printing press to either text was considered tenuous at best. Centres may also like to consider advising against candidates' fairly frequent use of the non-sequitur "random capitalisation of all nouns". This phrase appeared across numerous responses at all levels of the ability range and whilst the Examiner didn't feel this suggested a lack of understanding, in some cases subsequent discussion engaged very coherently with the reasons for this very deliberate capitalisation, it is a phrase best avoided if only for reasons of logic.

H470/03 Independent language research

General Comments

This has been a largely successful first series for this new specification and unfamiliar assessment approach for OCR centres. The majority of centres embraced the ethos and spirit of the specification within the NEA by offering ample freedom of choice to their candidates in relation to topic titles and data sources. A full range of topics were considered, from exploration of linguistic presentation of power within current political debates, presentation of gender within popular television programmes, music lyrics or literature (children's books being particularly popular), historical language change, child language acquisition and a range of language focuses within advertisement and across various media platforms. Candidates often showed ingenuity and/or current socio-political awareness within their choice of topic and selection of data sources, and very many of the folders demonstrated a lively engagement with the task. A wide range of abilities were evidenced during this series, but the moderating team all commented on the high number of purposeful and successful folders that they had seen.

Administration

The vast majority of centres provided the sample folders in a timely fashion, with many arriving in advance of the deadline. This was greatly appreciated by the moderating team. Those few centre-samples which arrived late had generally communicated this to OCR so that the moderating process was not overly impacted by late submission. Only a very few centres submitted work late without contacting OCR. There were a few occasions where the correct sample had not been sent.

A number of centres helpfully provided the sample in either candidate order or rank order, and this approach certainly aided moderators. Many centres also provided a copy of the IMS1 which was also very useful.

Generally, the folders were presented in good order, enclosing fully completed cover sheets that recorded word counts, correct marks for each task, centre name and number and candidate names and numbers. However, there were examples of centres not providing key information such as candidate numbers/names which caused some confusion during the moderation process. There were also a rather high number of centres where different marks were recorded on the system and on the cover sheets and/or on summative comments within the work or on additional (centre-created) feedback sheets. Again, such administrative issues caused delay to the moderating process. A handful of centres did not provide completed cover-sheets for the candidates; centres are reminded that this is an essential document to both record key information but also to authenticate the candidates' work.

There were a variety of approaches to packaging the folders. It was determined by the moderating team that the most accessible approach was to use treasury tags, binding documents within the top corner. Treasury tags worked best where they were loosely tied to enable pages to be turned without risking tearing. Where A3 Poster formats have been used it is most useful to attach at one corner and then fold the document. There were some cases where centres had submitted loose sheets of paper, and this approach should certainly be avoided in future series. It is also important to ensure that the two task documents are attached to each other.

Many centres ensured that the folders included the data source(s), and this is important to aid the moderating team to assess the success of the discussion within the two tasks. There were examples where numerous appendices were provided. Certainly, the data sources should be provided, as too should any graphs recording findings and one copy of any questionnaires used to gather information. However, it is unnecessary to enclose documents which were used for

secondary reading. A number of centres also provided bibliographies. The quality of bibliographies was rather variable and centres should encourage candidates to adopt a recognised referencing system to both cite sources within the Investigation and Poster and to create appropriate bibliographies, where all sources are recorded. Indeed, the moderating team have commented that there appears to be a correlation between the provision of detailed and reasonably extensive bibliographies and the success of the folders.

Task-setting

There was a very wide range of topic focuses seen this series and it was especially pleasing to see that topics were generally reflective of candidates' individual interests. The most successful folders, across all topics, were those which had a clearly defined task focus. Those tasks which were posed as tightly focused questions and/or which linked the topic focus to specific data sources tended to adopt a purposefully directed approach from the outset. Task titles which were less successful were those which were overly generalised such as: 'How do boys and girls differ in terms of language use?'.

In terms of approaching tasks setting, it was clear that the most successful folders chose topics that allowed them to apply a range of concepts/issues/contexts and/or to make comparisons between sets of data. They tended to have a very clear focus on the specific purpose of the Investigation, which allowed them to give a precise, succinct set of aims and hypothesis. It also ensured that the report kept to the point of the investigation. Stronger responses acknowledged not only the concepts, but also the theorists, and applied their knowledge and understanding to their findings in a sophisticated, consistently critical manner. Similarly, contextual influences had clearly been considered early in the planning process and in refining the topic and this ensured an embedded engagement with this element across the tasks.

Weak folders either chose a limited set of data to compare or comment on, or chose so much data that they could not effectively condense all their detail into a meaningfully focused analysis. This tended to result in a broad, vague and often generalised/ overly assertive study. This also meant that investigations were often not analyses, but a description of language features. Some weaker ones chose narrow topics, such as internet gaming or blogs and tried to apply inappropriate language concepts, resulting in rather contrived observations.

While the vast majority of topics were valid and accessible, there were some topic focuses that simply led candidates to focus on extraneous, irrelevant discussion which lacked linguistic merit. Though this was not limited to literary texts, there were a number of examples where candidates had resorted to character profiles and plot description rather than a genuine linguistic analysis.

It is important that centres provide support to candidates in the selection of the tasks as selecting appropriately focused titles caused problems for candidates working at the middle or lower levels. It is advisable for centres to engage in meaningful discussion with candidates as to what types of topics and data sources are likely to yield valuable insights into language usage and what this says about individuals and/or societies. The key question should be 'why?' – why is this a linguistically relevant study? There was perhaps a little too much emphasis in a large number of folders on why the candidate found the broad topical area interesting (commenting on superfluous detail such as always liking football, or a wish to be a politician in the future etc) rather than on the linguistic value of studying this particular data source in relation to specific concepts/issues on language use and the way it reflects or is influenced by specific contexts.

Centres are reminded that they should also seek approval for titles in advance of the January deadline, in order that inappropriate topics can be highlighted before candidates commence work on them.

There were some instances where Poster titles differed from that of the Investigation, and though it is acknowledged that advice has been provided by OCR that this is an allowed

approach, it should be understood that the new title should be selected to enhance the communication of key ideas extracted from the Investigation and synthesised within the Poster. There have been examples where the new formatting of the title has resulted in an overly informal register being adopted within the Poster, and this is certainly not a desirable outcome given that the new audience is still an academic one.

Application of the mark scheme

Investigation:

The most successful Investigations integrated all three AOs across all sections (and certainly within the analysis section). The structure of these Investigations was systematic and demonstrated an incisive engagement with the data source(s). The most successful Investigations were purposeful and focused and centred on a well-considered set of aims and underpinning hypothesis that were supported by concepts/issues/contexts. Successful Investigations were likely to judiciously present information visually - via graphs, tables etc, but certainly effectively sub-sectioned analysis of key linguistic features (AO1). These Investigations critically considered a number of concepts/issues/theories of language or one/two in considerable detail. Discussion of concepts was addressed at an explicit level - though the approaches taken to the analysis of the source also demonstrated a conceptual awareness. These Investigations offered meaningful discussion as to how the concepts/issues are supported or refuted by the data (AO2). Similarly, a range of contexts were considered and were addressed within the opening sections to establish the purpose of the Investigation and were revisited throughout later sections (AO3).

The less successful Investigations tended to demonstrate some success in the application of linguistic methods but the comments on data were more often assertive rather than analytical (though at the top of Level Two there may have been an attempt towards analysis). Folders at the lower levels often lacked a clear set of aims and objectives and the commentary of the data source was often a little shapeless. The organisation of the material within less successful folders also lacked cohesion as there was little cross-referencing between the sections. Sections were also sometimes missing (Evaluation section may not be included for example) or less developed than others (Bullet points may be used to provide an introduction of aims or hypothesis for example) (AO1). Candidates working at the lower levels addressed language concepts/issues to some extent, though this engagement often had little depth and the discussion of these aspects was fairly slight (mentioned in one section only, or mentioned numerous times but without much detailed engagement). The less successful Investigations lacked real critical engagement with the concepts/issues - and where discussion was offered it was not overly convincing (AO2). Contexts were addressed, but often these were general, simplistic and/or assertive. The discussion on how contexts shapes meaning within the data source did on occasion offer some insights in a very broad or narrow sense (AO3). Perhaps the greatest reason for lack of success was the bolt-on approach to concepts/issues and contexts, as at the lowest levels there were clear indications that these had not been considered during the planning stages of the Investigation and had been included as an afterthought.

AO1 was often managed well in terms of organisation of the Investigation and approach to data analysis. However, there were many examples where sections of the Investigation were missing or inadequately developed. There were also numerous occasions where candidates had discussed superfluous detail, such as personal interests being the inspiration for the study, or a very detailed methodology that charts every decision and action taken during the planning of the Investigation. These aspects seriously limited the amount of focus that could be applied to the analysis/ findings and conclusions sections. Though sub-headings were appropriately used in most analysis sections, more use could have been made of visual representation of the data findings (graphs/ tables/ charts).

AO2 was addressed to variable levels of success, but very often was well managed. Centres might note however, that many candidates were often working with theoretical sources that would potentially be considered out-dated now. It is advisable where candidates work with theories that are established, but possibly less relevant in contemporary contexts, that they address why they might be deemed an appropriate focus for the Investigation. It would be useful for candidates to set established, older theories against emerging theories/concepts to demonstrate an understanding of how the conceptual framework has shifted.

Of all the AOs the least successful was often AO3, as candidates who demonstrated proficiency within the other two AOs, seemed to be less secure when discussing how contexts might influence the construction of meanings within their source material. Often contextual detail was considered in a rather general and assertive sense, and was not always convincingly discussed.

Many of the centres had clearly enforced the guidance word count, and this certainly benefitted candidates as they were able to appropriately gauge the expected depth and breadth required to fully engage with the topic area and source material. There were instances of overly long Investigations, and there were instances where this was to the detriment of the quality of the Investigation. Centres should understand that while the word count is advisory, it has been set at 2000 – 2500 words to allow for some flexibility in the amount of coverage candidates might produce. There should be no need, therefore, to go beyond the higher-level word count. More importantly candidates are encouraged to stay within the word limits as this teaches valuable skills in terms of concision, focus and fulfilling the expectations of a given brief.

The majority of centres applied the marking criteria accurately, and the best marking judgements demonstrated some discernment within the marks applied to each AO. Centres should note that candidates may not demonstrate the same level of achievement across all AOs, and a nuanced approach to mark allocation is required. There was much excellent practice in relation to the provision of detailed, analytical comments which appropriately addressed the criteria. Where centres had provided detailed comments against each AO and provided separate marks for each, it was generally easier to see the justification for the marks and to agree the marks awarded. Generally, all centres that left comments appropriately, utilised key descriptors from the mark scheme, but also linked their comments to specifically successful areas within each folder. There were a few centres that offered very minimal, and sometimes no, annotation or summative comments, and, where marks differed from those that the moderating team awarded, this made it very difficult to understand how the original mark was arrived at.

When moderators disagreed with centre marks, the most common disparity seemed to be within the higher levels, where there was some inflation of marks seen. Typically, the disparity was seen due to a lack of understanding as to what represents an incisive and systematic approach to language analysis and wide range of appropriate methods. To achieve in Level five folders should demonstrate from the outset a focussed and critical engagement with the topic, data source and AO2/AO3. Where this is not the case the folder is likely to sit within Level four (or possibly below). Similarly, there should be a securely academic register, and this requires both an appropriate use of terminology (subject and topic specific) and also a sophisticated level of communication. There were also examples of folders being inaccurately placed in the higher levels where AO2/AO3 had been addressed rather inconsistently.

Academic Poster:

Given the newness of this format of assessment there was some expectation that there would be a variety of approaches and outcomes. Successful Posters adopted an appropriately formal register for an academic audience (general or subject specific based on what the candidate indicates within their task title for this element). The highest achieving Posters demonstrated an excellent level of synthesis and distillation of key information from within the Investigation and the balance between sections was well-judged – in particular, focus on the findings / analysis section was the most detailed. The best Posters effectively used graphs / tables / images of

sources to present information succinctly. There was also some creativity in the use of visual tools, which were used to communicate ideas rather than for purely aesthetic purposes.

The less successful Posters provided only very brief written material and thereby lacked depth, or contained too much detail and thereby failed to demonstrate selectivity and focus. These Posters often lacked cohesion and some key sections were missing or significantly underdeveloped. Often the lesser successful Posters focused their attention in the wrong areas, for example lengthy aims and methodologies, rather than on analysing key findings and drawing out meaningful conclusions. Often less successful folders did not utilise any visual tools, or, where they did, these tools were not used to communicate ideas. The register on these Posters was often overly colloquial and therefore failed to meet the needs of the academic audience. The very least successful folders adopted a cut and paste approach. Centres should note that where candidates only cut and paste material from their Investigation, and make no other attempt to adapt to the new format and audience, or do not attempt to synthesise key information from the Investigation, they should be placed within Level 1.

It was noted that a number of the Posters had not achieved the recommended word count of between 750-1000 words leading to some under-developed discussion. We saw a range of paper sizes being used for the Poster, and the moderating team have noted that A3 seems to offer the best opportunities for candidates to format all of the sections and provide the depth required for this task. A4 is also acceptable, but it was felt that for some candidates this size might have limited what candidates were able to achieve in terms of the amount of content that they could include whilst still being legible. It is understood that not all centres can ensure A3 printing, but it would be perfectly acceptable for two A4 sheets to be fastened together. Anything larger than A3 is unnecessary. It is also important that candidates use computer created Posters, as hand-drawn and written Posters are not usually an accepted medium for this academically recognised assessment model.

It was often the case that AO5 had been over-rewarded, and it seems that a number of centres were unclear as to what is expected of this format. Detailed guidance is provided within the specification as to what sections should be included and placing emphasis on the synthesis and distillation of key information from within the Investigation and this should be referred to when considering the 'content' of the Poster. The mark scheme should be considered to judge the success of this synthesis of material at a content level in addition to the presentational and communication level. It should also be noted that while candidates might achieve very highly in the Investigation, they may not be deserving of marks within the higher levels for AO5 where they have not produced Very Good to Excellent transformations. Similarly, centres should be prepared to see Posters that are more successful than individual AOs or all AOs within the Investigation.

Internal Moderation

The moderation team saw much evidence of internal moderation and it does seem that the vast majority of the centres have engaged with some form of internal moderation (even across centres in a couple of instances). The very best examples of moderation demonstrated a very close engagement with the folders, where annotations and summative comments had been left by a second marker (sometimes additional markers) and where clear discussions had taken place to determine the final marks. There were also many examples where second markers had simply verified marks, or adjusted marks, though had not otherwise annotated the script. Generally, internal moderation was evident in the centres who had applied the mark scheme most accurately, suggesting that the rigour of the marking had really honed the marking judgements. However, centres should avoid wholesale elevation/ reduction of marks, as where this did occur in some centres the amended mark on some folders could not always be justified. It is recommended that centres engage in internal moderation of some description, and smaller centres may also consider engaging in moderation with other centres which can be accessed via the OCR Centre Network system.

OCR Report to Centres – June 2017

Overall this series has been very successful, and there are very many strengths which centres can build on as greater familiarity with the assessment model is generated. The moderating team were impressed with how well-prepared candidates were for these two tasks and the range of topics, the lively engagement and the generally rigorous approach to marking. Many thanks for the hard work and conscientious efforts of all those centres that have submitted this series.

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